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30 August 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Director of Central Intelligence  
SUBJECT: Need for CORONA Satellite Photography

1. This memorandum is for the information of the Director of Central Intelligence.
2. Based on the reports of the Deputy Directors' meeting on Monday, 26 August, and on the discussion initiated by the Acting Director of Central Intelligence at the pre-USIB briefing on 28 August, it appears to me that there are 2 questions which, though related, must be examined separately. These problems are:

- a. Is the presently approved CORONA satellite reconnaissance schedule for the remainder of the calendar year 1963 in excess of our requirements?

- b. Is the amount of CORONA photography being acquired, along with all other exotic photographic reconnaissance products, of such a magnitude that it exceeds the capabilities of the exploitation assets at NPIC or other governmental photo-processing centers? Does

NRO review(s)  
completed.

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this in turn sometimes result in the intelligence analyst receiving an inferior product; and, by and large, is there excessive repetition in the photography and too little that is new and of real value?

3. COMOR, on 27 August, held a special meeting in response to a request to consider the first question. It concluded that, taking into account the carefully defined needs of the Board during the spring and summer of 1963, although the slippage in the CORONA schedule would result in more coverage at the end of this year than planned, the results to date have been fortunately fruitful but by no means exhaustive. It was felt that at this time it would not be wise to alter the remaining schedule for 1963. However, the discussion and consideration of the data assembled at short notice for this meeting showed clearly to the Committee that it would be helpful to the Board if the COMOR continued its study and submitted to the Board its findings and recommendations on the schedule by about the first of October 1963. This timing in presentation is crucial because a decision shortly after that date must be made on whether the two now scheduled CORONA shots in November and the one in December need in fact be used.

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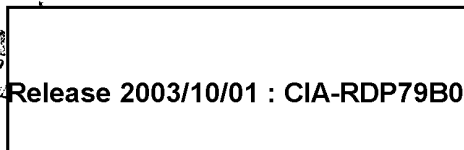
4. It is already well-established practice with regard to exotic manned and satellite reconnaissance that the Board through COMOR and its Photo Working Group carefully examines the results of each mission in terms of the requirements programmed into that mission in order to fruitfully target subsequent missions. The close working relationship of the intelligence analysts with the Photo Working Group is the most certain method of obtaining the information desired and assessing at any time whether we have reached a point where additional reconnaissance is unnecessary. (A case in point where change has been recommended is the Board's substitution of a CORONA mission for an ARGON in November 1962.) This mechanism operated before the Cuban crisis, for all the Far Eastern reconnaissance, for every satellite photo mission and, in different form, has operated since the summer of 1956 with regard to the U-2 program over Russia. In addition because of the operational and political hazards in both exotic manned and satellite photo reconnaissance, because of the R&D difficulties met in developing satellite reconnaissance on an assured basis, and finally because of the extensive costs involved, the United States Intelligence Board has interested itself in the validity of the reconnaissance and the timing of planning and conducting operations.

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5. With regard to the second question noted in para 2b above, COMOR has continually over the years, and especially as a result of the collection over Cuba, been concerned about the effects of collection on the available PI resources and whether they will be able effectively to exploit the material. It must be recognized, however, that the responsibility for the management and coordination of the photo exploitation assets of the Government have not been a responsibility of COMOR except to advise with regard to the preliminary reporting when the missions have returned. However, because of the information on this subject which has been brought to light in COMOR meetings, I personally do not believe that the examination of CORONA material is at this juncture suffering in terms of scrutinizing all film to insure that all critical elements have been discerned. This is not to say that because of the vagaries incident to photo interpretation some critical activity might not be missed or later discovered. Furthermore, the needs of the United States Government which can be answered through the exploitation of satellite photography are multitudinous and whereas some subjects are of common concern and we profit by having different eyes examining the photography in different governmental units, there are many targets which are examined to meet the unique and specialized needs

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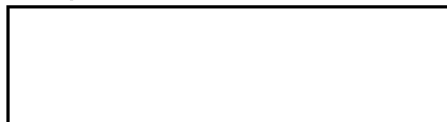
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of the various agencies. Furthermore, and based primarily on the experience of the Photo Working Group of COMOR, it seems that the intelligence analyst is far from glutted and in expressing his requirements specifies the importance of photographic coverage. We cannot judge whether the embarrassment of riches had had an adverse influence on the estimate process nor can we estimate the factor of cost versus value.


6. Before this latter subject were to be raised at the Board for discussion, I would strongly urge that the Executive Director call together at a minimum the DDI, the Director, NPIC, and the DDS&T as well as any of their concerned representatives for a briefing from the Director, NPIC. Subsequently, there should be a careful definition of what precisely is the problem and the most effective method of coping with it. At that point it may be desirable to raise the problem with the Board.

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James Q. Reber  
Chairman

Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance

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